

MAUREEN W. YEUNG

Faith in Jesus and Paul

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*

147

Mohr Siebeck

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Herausgegeben von
Jörg Frey, Martin Hengel, Otfried Hofius

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Maureen W. Yeung

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A Comparison with Special Reference to ‘Faith that
Can Remove Mountains’ and ‘Your Faith Has
Healed/Saved You’

Mohr Siebeck

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*To my mother
with love and gratitude*

Preface

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Soli Deo gloria.

Hong Kong, December 2001

Maureen W. Yeung

Table of Contents

Preface	VII
Abbreviations	XV

Part One Introduction

Chapter I. Introduction.....	3
1. Methodology and Thesis Statement	3
1.1. Introductory Remarks	3
1.2. The Jesus-Paul Debate	5
1.3. Scope of Research	10
1.4. Methodological Approach	12
1.5. Thesis Statement	14
2. The Problem	14
2.1. Dichotomy between the Jesus of History and the Christ of Faith	15
2.2. Dichotomy between Jesus' 'Miracle-Faith' and Paul's 'Kerygma/ Salvation Faith'.....	16
2.3. Research Questions	17

Part Two 'Faith that Can Remove Mountains' — A Case for Historical Continuity between Jesus and Paul

Chapter II. The Interpretation of Mountain-Removing Faith.....	21
1. Paul's Source in 1 Corinthians 13:2	21
1.1. Identifying True Parallels of 1 Corinthians 13:2	21
1.1.1. In Search of Hellenistic Parallels	23
1.1.2. In Search of Jewish Parallels	23
1.1.3. Summary.....	29
1.2. Was Paul Influenced by Jesus?	30
2. The Nature of Mountain-Removing Faith	34

2.1. The Nature of Mountain-Removing Faith in Zechariah 4:6–7	34
2.2. The Nature of Mountain-Removing Faith in Antiquities 2.333	36
2.3. The Nature of Mountain-Removing Faith according to Jesus	39
2.3.1. The Jewish ‘Holy’ Mountain Tradition	40
2.3.2. Jesus’ Mountain-Removing Faith in Light of Jewish Background	43
2.4. The Nature of Mountain-Removing Faith in 1 Corinthians 13:2	47
3. Summary	49

Part Three

‘Your Faith Has Healed/Saved You’ —

A Case for Theological Continuity between Jesus and Paul

Chapter III. The Authenticity of ‘Your Faith Has Healed/Saved You’.	53
1. Criteria of Authenticity	54
2. The Authenticity of Jesus’ Healing Miracles	56
3. Arguments Against the Authenticity of ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε	57
4. Arguments For the Authenticity of ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε	59
5. Summary	63
Chapter IV. The Hellenistic Healing Miracles as Background	64
1. Historical and Archaeological Evidence	66
1.1. The Popularity of Saviour-healers in First-century Palestine	67
1.2. The Popularity of Asclepius in First-century Palestine	69
1.2.1. Phoenicia	71
1.2.2. Tiberias	73
1.2.3. Hammat Gader	74
1.2.4. The Pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem	76
1.2.5. Marble Tablet on the Island in the Tiber at Rome	80
1.2.6. The Healings of Vespasian	81
1.2.7. Tablet from Asturica-Augusta in Spain	82
1.2.8. Summary	83
2. Similarities between Asclepius and Jesus	83
3. Differences between Asclepius and Jesus	92
4. Summary	97
Chapter V. The Jewish Healing Tradition as Background	98
1. The Faith Factor in Jewish Healing Tradition	101
1.1. Jewish Scriptures	101
1.2. Tobit	107

1.3. Dead Sea Scrolls	107
1.4. Sirach	109
1.5. The Lives of the Prophets	110
1.6. Philo	111
1.7. Josephus	112
1.8. Hanina ben Dosa	113
1.9. Talmud	114
1.10. New Testament	114
1.11. Summary	116
2. The Inseparability of Healing and Salvation in Jewish Healing Tradition	116
2.1. Jewish Scriptures	117
2.2. Dead Sea Scrolls	120
2.3. 2 Maccabees	121
2.4. 1 Enoch	122
2.5. Wisdom of Solomon	123
2.6. Philo	125
2.7. Josephus	126
2.8. Hanina ben Dosa	126
2.9. Talmud	127
2.10. New Testament	127
2.11. Summary	131
Chapter VI. The Jewish Salvation-Faith Tradition as Background ...	132
1. Jewish Scriptures	133
1.1. Genesis 15:6	133
1.2. Psalm 22:8 (Matthew 27:43)	134
1.3. 2 Kings 18–19 and Chronicles 32	136
1.4. Isaiah	138
1.5. Habakkuk 2:4	139
1.6. Summary	140
2. Qumran Literature	141
2.1. The Habakkuk Commentary (1QpHab 8.2)	141
2.2. The Rule of the Community (1QS 8.3; 10.25)	144
2.3. Thanksgiving Hymns (1QH 16.17, 17.14)	145
2.4. 2QApocryphon of Moses (2QapMo fr.i 1.2)	147
2.5. 4QFestival Prayers (4Q508 fr.iii, 1,3)	148
2.6. 4QSongs of the Sage ^b (4Q511 fr.xviii 2.9)	150
2.7. Plea for Deliverance (11QPs ^a 19.9, 14)	152
2.8. Summary	153
3. Sirach	154

4. 1 Maccabees	156
5. 4 Maccabees	158
6. Wisdom of Solomon	161
7. Philo	162
8. Josephus	165
9. New Testament	167
10. Summary	168
Chapter VII. The Meaning of Jesus' 'Your Faith Has Healed/Saved You'	170
1. The Woman who Touched Jesus' Garment (Mk 5:24–34; par. Mt 9:19–22; Lk 8:42–48)	171
2. Bartimaeus (Mk 10:46–52; par. Mt 20:29–34; Lk 18:35–43)	179
3. The Sinful Woman (Lk 7:36–50)	183
4. The Samaritan Leper (Lk 17:11–19)	189
5. Summary	193
Chapter VIII. From Jesus to Paul (I): Paul's Use of Habakkuk 2:4	196
1. Paul's Indebtedness to the Old Testament	197
1.1. Paul's Use of the Book Context of Habakkuk	200
1.2. Paul's Summation of the LXX and the MT Texts	200
1.2.1. Acts 13:41	201
1.2.2. Romans 1:17	203
1.2.3. Galatians 3:11	208
1.3. Paul's National Element in Faith	210
1.4. Summary	211
2. Paul's Indebtedness to Jesus	212
2.1. The Messianic Reference in Habakkuk 2:4	213
2.2. Habakkuk 2:4 As a Key Passage Behind ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε	216
3. Summary	224
Chapter IX. From Jesus to Paul (II): Paul's Use of Genesis 15:6	226
1. Scholarly Debate	226
2. Genesis 15:6 in Jewish Tradition	232
2.1. Genesis 15:6	234
2.2. Genesis 26:2–5	235
2.3. Nehemiah 9:7–8	237
2.4. 4QFlorilegium	239
2.5. 4QMMT	241
2.6. Sirach 44:19–21	249
2.7. 1 Maccabees 2:50–52	251

2.8. Philo	252
2.9. Genesis Targums	254
2.10. The Mekilta de Rabbi Ishmael	258
2.11. James 2:21–23	260
2.12. Summary	261
3. Paul’s Use of Genesis 15:6	264
3.1. Paul’s Originality	265
3.2. Paul’s Development of Jesus’ Ideas	271
3.2.1. Paul’s Development of Jesus’ Faith Claims	273
3.2.2. Paul’s Development of Jesus’ Pronouncement of Purity	274
3.2.3. Paul’s Development of the Abraham Story in Jesus	275
3.2.4. Paul’s Development of Jesus’ Miracle-Salvation Faith	281
4. Summary	282

Part Four Conclusions

Chapter X. Conclusions	287
1. Jesus-Paul Relationship	287
1.1. Control One — Elimination of False Parallels	288
1.2. Control Two — Authenticity Assessment	289
1.3. Control Three — Common Religious Heritage	289
1.4. Control Four — Influence of Early Church	290
1.5. Control Five — Jesus’ Distinctiveness in Paul	291
1.6. Control Six — Paul’s Distinctiveness in Jesus	291
1.7. Summary	292
2. Faith in Jesus and Paul	293
2.1. The Theocentric Nature of Faith and the False Dichotomy between Jesus’ ‘Miracle-Faith’ and Paul’s ‘Kerygma/Salvation-Faith’	293
2.2. The False Dichotomy between the Jesus of History and the Christ of Faith .	295
2.3. The Interrelations among ‘Healing’, ‘Salvation’, ‘Life’ and ‘Faith’	296
2.4. π̄πωσις/π̄ιστις as Faith/Faithfulness	297
3. Methodological Reflections	297

Bibliography	299
Index of Authors	323
Index of References	325
Index of Subjects	338

Abbreviations

The system of abbreviations of Biblical books as well as periodicals, reference works and primary sources follows that of the *Journal of Biblical Literature* 117 (1998): 555–579, with the following exceptions:

- Mt Matthew
- Mk Mark
- Lk Luke
- Jn John

Other abbreviations are:

- NIDNTT* *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*
- PIBA* *Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association*
- TJ* *Trinity Journal*

Secondary sources are cited by the author's name and full title on first occurrence in the book, and by name and a short title thereafter.

Part One

Introduction

Chapter I

Introduction

1. Methodology and Thesis Statement

1.1. Introductory Remarks

The theological concern of this thesis is vividly illustrated by *The Last Temptation*, a novel turned into a popular movie in the nineteen eighties. Its concluding scene is not only dramatic in its own right, but it also challenges the continuity between Jesus and Paul. To demonstrate our point it is worth quoting the confrontation between Jesus and his ‘apostle’ Paul at length:

Approaching Paul, he (Jesus) grabbed him by the shoulders and shook him violently.

“Liar! Liar!” he shouted. “I am Jesus of Nazareth and I was never crucified, never resurrected. I am the son of Mary and of Joseph the Carpenter of Nazareth. I am not the son of God, I am the son of man — like everyone else. What blasphemies you utter! What affronteries! What lies! Is it with such lies, swindler, that you dare save the world?”

“You, you?” murmured Paul, bewildered. While Master Lazarus spoke, frothing at the mouth, Paul had noticed blue marks like nail-wounds on his hands and feet, and a further wound over his heart.

“Why are you rolling your eyes?” cried Jesus. “Why do you stare at my hands and feet? Those marks you see were stamped on me by God during my sleep. By God — or by the Tempter: I still can’t understand which. I dreamt I was on the cross and in pain, but I cried out, awoke, and my pain disappeared. What I should have suffered while awake, I suffered while asleep — and escaped!”

. . . Now it was Paul’s turn to explode.

“Shut your shameless mouth!” he shouted, rushing at him. “Be quiet, or men will hear you and die of fright. In the rotteness, the injustice and poverty of this world, the Crucified and Resurrected Jesus has been the one precious consolation for the honest man, the wronged man. True or false — what do I care! It’s enough if the world is saved! . . . I create the truth, create it out of obstinacy and longing and faith. I don’t struggle to find it — I build it. I build it taller than man and thus I make man grow. If the world is to be saved, it is necessary — do you hear — absolutely necessary for you to be crucified, and I shall crucify you, like it or not; it is necessary for you to be resurrected, and I shall resurrect you, like it or not. . . And in every corner of the earth, innumerable eyes will look up and see you in the air — crucified. They will weep, and the tears will cleanse their souls of all their sins. But on the third

day I shall raise you from the dead, because there is no salvation without a resurrection. The final, the most horrible enemy is death. I shall abolish death. How? By resurrecting you as Jesus, son of God — the Messiah! . . . I shall become your apostle whether you like it or not. I shall construct you and your life and your teachings and your crucifixion and resurrection just as I wish. Joseph the carpenter of Nazareth did not beget you; I begot you — I, Paul the scribe from Tarsus in Cilicia.”¹

Nowhere is the wedge driven between Jesus and Paul sharper than in this short and provocative episode. Paul is seen to be an innovative theologian who seizes upon Jesus as the protagonist of his own religion. On this view, it does not really matter what the earthly Jesus has done or preached, or whether this Jesus has any impact on the thinking of Paul. Instead of being the faithful disciple of Jesus, Paul actually creates a myth around Jesus to serve his own purpose.

This interpretation of the Jesus-Paul relation is but a popular version of the more academic Jesus-Paul debate which has occupied scholars since the beginning of the nineteenth century and was ignited afresh by William Wrede’s *Paulus* (1904, ET *Paul* in 1907). After W. Wrede asserted that “Paul is to be regarded as the second founder of Christianity,”² scholars have been compelled to take sides on the relation between Paul and the earthly Jesus. An array of opinions have been articulated. The situation is summed up succinctly by S. G. Wilson:

Among modern scholars Jeremias maximizes the continuity between Jesus and Paul, Kümmel proposes a more modest list of common features, Käsemann makes do with a minimal link and Bultmann takes the more radical view that the search for continuity must be rejected in principle. Faced with these alternatives, and variations in between, it is natural enough for scholars simply to opt for that version which best fits their predilections about Jesus and Paul without feeling they have anything new to add.³

The dust has not yet settled, even though nearly a hundred years have passed since the appearance of Wrede’s book. No wonder A. J. M. Wedderburn remarked recently (1996), “It is hard to think of a more pressing theme in the whole field of New Testament study than that of the relationship of Paul to Jesus.”⁴ This statement is no exaggeration, not only because the issue remains exceedingly controversial, but also because how a person views this relationship will greatly affect his or her interpretation

¹ N. Kazantzakis, *The Last Temptation* 487–489.

² W. Wrede, *Paul* 179.

³ S. G. Wilson, “From Jesus to Paul,” 2–3.

⁴ A. J. M. Wedderburn’s foreword to W. A. Simmons, *A Theology of Inclusion in Jesus and Paul* v.

of many burning issues in New Testament study, one of them being whether Paul owes his theology more to Greco-Roman pagan religions than to the message of the earthly Jesus.

1.2. The Jesus-Paul Debate

The first important scholar to discuss the relationship between Paul and the words of Jesus is H. H. Cludius. In his work of 1808⁵ he sets out to differentiate between the apparent and the fundamental forms of Christianity, “theils einzusehen, wie früh man statt der *Gotteslehre Jesu*, eine *Christusreligion* angenommen hat, theils sich zu dem Lautersten und Heiligsten der Religion leichter zu erheben.”⁶ After a survey of Paul’s letters, he comes to the conclusion that Paul knows nearly nothing about the pre-Easter teachings of Jesus.⁷ This provocative thesis was either taken up in various forms (F. C. Baur, 1831⁸; D. F. Strauß, 1835⁹; W. Wrede, 1904¹⁰) or strongly criticised (J. K. L. Gieselear, 1818¹¹; J. H. A. Ebrard, 1842¹²; O. Thenius, 1843¹³; H. Paret, 1858¹⁴; A. von Harnack, 1901¹⁵; P. Feine, 1902¹⁶; A. Resch, 1904¹⁷; A. Schlatter, 1906¹⁸) in the following decades. It is interesting that two important works representing the opposing camps appeared in the same year of 1904: W. Wrede’s *Paulus* and A. Resch’s *Der Paulinismus und die Logia Jesu*. On the one hand, Wrede asserts that Paul’s Christ did not originate from the earthly Jesus. Paul merely identified his pre-conversion belief in a pre-existent heavenly figure with faith in ‘Jesus’.¹⁹ Wrede concludes, “It follows conclusively from all this that Paul is to be regarded as *the second founder*

⁵ H. H. Cludius, *Uransichten des Christenthums nebst Untersuchungen über einige Bücher des neuen Testaments*.

⁶ H. H. Cludius, *Uransichten III–IV*, quoted in R. Riesner, “Paulus,” 347.

⁷ H. H. Cludius, *Uransichten* 142–145, quoted in R. Riesner, “Paulus,” 347.

⁸ F. C. Baur, “Die Christuspartei in der korinthischen Gemeinde.”

⁹ D. F. Strauss, *Leben Jesu*.

¹⁰ W. Wrede, *Paul*.

¹¹ J. K. L. Gieselear, *Historisch-kritischer Versuch über die Entstehung und die frühesten Schicksale der schriftlichen Evangelien*.

¹² J. H. A. Ebrard, *Wissenschaftliche Kritik der evangelischen Geschichte*.

¹³ O. Thenius, *Das Evangelium ohne die Evangelien*.

¹⁴ H. Paret, “Paulus und Jesus.”

¹⁵ A. Harnack, *What is Christianity?* 189, 194.

¹⁶ P. Feine, *Jesus Christus und Paulus*.

¹⁷ A. Resch, *Der Paulinismus und die Logia Jesu in ihrem gegenseitigen Verhältnis untersucht*.

¹⁸ A. Schlatter, *Jesus und Paulus*.

¹⁹ W. Wrede, *Paul* 87–89, 147, 151, 166.

*of Christianity.*²⁰ On the other hand, Resch claims to have found more than a thousand parallels between Jesus and Paul. Just as Wrede's assertion still holds sway, Resch's thorough study is still highly regarded by scholars. W. D. Davies remarks, "It must be admitted that Resch overstated his case," but "the tables presented by Resch in his work *Der Paulinismus und die Logia Jesu* (1904) demand serious evaluation."²¹

The Jesus-Paul debate of this century has been conducted on two levels. On the literary level, scholars who maintain the continuity of Jesus and Paul seek to establish verbal parallels between Jesus and Paul. This route is taken by scholars like David M. Stanley,²² D. L. Dungan,²³ B. Fjärstedt,²⁴ Dale C. Allison,²⁵ P. Stuhlmacher,²⁶ M. Thompson²⁷ and R. Riesner.²⁸ Dale Allison, for instance, argues on the basis of a clustering of allusions that Paul knew three collections of sayings — the sources behind Mark 9:33–50, Luke 6:27–38 and Mark 6:6b–13.²⁹ The Achilles' heel in this kind of effort is that even if real parallels are found, they cannot prove that Paul depended on the words of Jesus. Mere verbal similarity does not necessarily point to historical continuity. As a matter of fact, scholars who take a minimal view turn the evidence on its head. K. Wegenast claims that Paul did not conform to the Jesus tradition, but the other way round. Paul actually made the tradition serve him.³⁰ F. Neirynck strongly contests Allison's case and asserts that the so-called parallels, apart from 1 Cor 7:10–11 and 9:14, have not been proven to be Paul's direct use of Jesus' sayings in either the Q form or the Synoptic form.³¹ N. Walter states pungently, "Weitergabe von Tradition ist noch nicht in sich die Garantie für eine wirkliche Kontinuität auch in der Sache!"³² A middle position between the maximal and the minimal views is represented by James

²⁰ W. Wrede, *Paul* 179.

²¹ W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* 353.

²² D. M. Stanley, "Pauline Allusions to the Sayings of Jesus."

²³ D. L. Dungan, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Churches of Paul*.

²⁴ B. Fjärstedt, *Synoptic Tradition in 1 Corinthians*.

²⁵ D. C. Allison, "The Pauline Epistles and the Synoptic Gospels: The Pattern of the Parallels."

²⁶ P. Stuhlmacher, "Jesustradition im Römerbrief?"

²⁷ M. Thompson, *Clothed with Christ: The Example and Teaching of Jesus in Romans 12.1–15.13*.

²⁸ R. Riesner, "Paulus und die Jesus-Überlieferung," 347–365.

²⁹ D. C. Allison, "The Pauline Epistles," 19–22.

³⁰ K. Wegenast, *Das Verständnis der Tradition* 91–92.

³¹ F. Neirynck, "Paul and the Sayings of Jesus," 265–321.

³² N. Walter, "Paulus und die urchristliche Jesustradition," 518.

Dunn,³³ T. Holtz³⁴ and V. P. Furnish.³⁵ James Dunn, fully aware of the inconclusiveness of verbal parallels, accepts the varying degrees of similarity between a number of Paul's exhortations and elements within the Jesus tradition as such, arguing that this is actually evidence of the influence of the Jesus tradition, which was still a living tradition at Paul's time, working at the level of Paul's own thought process.³⁶

A more sophisticated level of the Jesus-Paul debate is the comparison of theological concepts. After W. Wrede, R. Bultmann posed the greatest challenge to the continuity between Jesus and Paul. Bultmann distinguishes the *historische Jesus* from the *geschichtliche Jesus*. In his view, Paul was not influenced by the *historische Jesus* because he encountered Christianity first in its Hellenised form. He was neither a disciple of the earthly Jesus nor dependent on the teachings of Jesus as mediated through the first disciples. The *geschichtliche Jesus*, however, played a key role in Paul's theology. It is the *Dass*, the fact that Jesus the crucified was proclaimed as God's Messiah, rather than the *Was*, the content of Jesus' teachings, that was important to Paul.³⁷ Käsemann, while agreeing with Bultmann's categories of the *historische* and the *geschichtliche Jesus*, allows a greater connection between the earthly Jesus and the exalted Christ.³⁸ In the same spirit, Kümmel ascribes Paul's eschatological understanding to the earthly Jesus although he is in accord with Bultmann concerning the role of eschatology in the Jesus-Paul question.³⁹

On the other hand, scholars like Eberhard Jüngel, Josef Blank and recently David Wenham tried to demonstrate the continuity between Jesus and Paul. E. Jüngel's method of connecting Jesus and Paul is quite innovative. He prefers the philosophical to the historical approach. At the outset of his *Paulus und Jesus* (1962) he states his methodology as follows:

Daß der Schritt von der paulinischen Rechtfertigungslehre zurück zur Verkündigung Jesu im Sinne einer neu gestellten Frage nach dem historischen Jesus *nicht* in der Absicht geschieht, das christologische Fundament der paulinischen Rechtfertigungs-

³³ J. Dunn, "Jesus Tradition in Paul."

³⁴ T. Holtz, "Paul and the Oral Gospel Tradition," and "Jesusüberlieferung und Briefliteratur."

³⁵ V. P. Furnish, *Jesus According to Paul*.

³⁶ J. Dunn, "Jesus Tradition," 155–178.

³⁷ R. Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding* 1. 220–246.

³⁸ E. Käsemann, "The Problem of the Historical Jesus," 23–25, 34–35.

³⁹ W. Kümmel, "Jesus und Paulus," 181.

lehre durch sogenannte Tatsachen historisch zu zementieren, dürfte aus dem bisher Gesagten deutlich sein. Es kann sich nicht darum handeln, das christologische Problem durch eine historische Untersuchung zu bagatellisieren. Vielmehr gilt es, durch eine Verhältnis-bestimmung der paulinischen Rechtfertigungslehre zur Verkündigung Jesu das christologische Problem verschärft, also gleichsam christologischer zur Sprache zu bringen.⁴⁰

Using the linguistic philosophy of G. Ebeling, E. Fuchs and ultimately M. Heidegger, he proposes that Paul's doctrine of justification and Jesus' message of the Kingdom of God are parallel eschatological *Sprachereignisse* (language-events). The two language events are essentially the same, making up an overall *Sprachgeschichte* (language-history). Although Jüngel succeeded in demonstrating the congruence of Jesus' and Paul's messages, he failed to prove the *historical* continuity between the two. E. Käsemann rightly criticised his approach as too mythological: "Das bedeutet dann jedoch, daß der Ausdruck 'eschatologische Sprachgeschichte' historisch überhaupt nichts klärt, also auch nicht das Verhältnis von Jesus und Paulus."⁴¹

J. Blank's approach is more historical. In his *Paulus und Jesus* (1968), he argues that Paul owed his conversion more to the Damascus road experience than to the encounter with the kerygma. Since the stoning of Stephen, who was a Hellenist, made a great impression on Paul before his conversion, Paul must have first encountered Christianity in its Hellenist Jewish form. The Hellenists may well have formed the bridge between the words of Jesus (e.g., the law-critical sayings) and Paul. Blank's case is severely undermined by H. Räisänen who shows that there is no comprehensive criticism of the law in Stephen's speech. Moreover, Räisänen argues that the Hellenists would have domesticated the words of Jesus and therefore would not be a bridge between Jesus and Paul.⁴²

A more comprehensive approach is adopted by D. Wenham. His *Paul: Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?* (1995) is a continuation of his many works on the Jesus-Paul question.⁴³ Wenham tries to demonstrate the continuity between Jesus and Paul on six issues: the Kingdom of God, Jesus' identity, the crucifixion, the mission and nature of the Church,

⁴⁰ E. Jüngel, *Paulus und Jesus* 4.

⁴¹ E. Käsemann, Review of *Paulus und Jesus* 185.

⁴² H. Räisänen, "The 'Hellenists' — A Bridge Between Jesus and Paul?" in his *The Torah and Christ* 242–306.

⁴³ E.g., "Paul and the Synoptic Apocalypse" (1981); "Paul's Use of the Jesus Tradition: Three Samples" (1985); "2 Corinthians 1:17, 18: Echo of a Dominical Logion" (1986); "The Story of Jesus Known to Paul" (1994).

ethics, and eschatology. In each of these chapters he first compares Jesus and Paul on the topic and then tries to prove that Paul was in some way indebted to Jesus on that topic.

The mixed response to Wenham's work shows that the Jesus-Paul debate has far from abated. While some scholars subscribe to Wenham's cumulative argument,⁴⁴ others find his case unconvincing.⁴⁵ Morna Hooker asserts that Wenham has succeeded only in demonstrating the general similarity between Jesus' and Paul's teachings, but not in proving Paul's dependence on Jesus. She puts forward several incisive questions which are worth considering:

But how much of this similarity is due to the fact that they [Jesus and Paul] shared a common background and culture? Is there anything *distinctive* in Jesus' teaching that is found also in Paul? And how much of the similarity is due to Paul's use of *early Christian tradition* (or vice versa), rather than to knowledge of Jesus' own teaching?⁴⁶

Andreas Köstenberger, albeit sharing Wenham's theological persuasion, doubts if it is necessary to prove that Paul used Jesus traditions extensively in order to show that Paul was a faithful follower of Jesus. In his opinion Paul could have remained faithful to Jesus' teaching while innovatively developing Jesus' original teachings. Wenham's painstaking attempt to demonstrate that Paul used Jesus' traditions extensively would not automatically clear Paul of charges of (legitimate or illegitimate) innovation.⁴⁷

It is this conviction that Jesus-Paul continuity can be proved without having to argue for Paul's use of Jesus' traditions that underlies a recent contribution to the debate. The work is a published doctoral thesis under the title of *A Theology of Inclusion in Jesus and Paul: The God of Outcasts and Sinners* (1996) by William A. Simmons. Simmons regards it futile to search for a 'link' or 'bridge' between the historical Jesus and Paul.⁴⁸ He also rejects the search for verbal parallels as inconclusive. In his comparison of theological concepts, he dismisses Jüngel's comparison as too language oriented. Instead he takes the event into consideration. He proposes that the continuity between Jesus and Paul lies in their understanding of God. Both of them view God as one who is extraordina-

⁴⁴ Favourable reviews include those of D. Allison, E. Hensell, J. Proctor, F. Thielman and R. Yarbrough.

⁴⁵ Critical reviews include those of M. Hooker, A. Köstenberger and F. Neirynck.

⁴⁶ M. Hooker, Review of *Paul: Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?* 758.

⁴⁷ A. Köstenberger, Review of *Paul: Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?* 261.

⁴⁸ W. Simmons, *A Theology of Inclusion in Jesus and Paul* ix.

rily gracious to the outcasts and Gentiles. This perspective runs contrary to the contemporary views. In this way, the ‘theology of inclusion’ of Jesus and Paul suggests that Paul is in touch with the historical Jesus.

The recent appearance of two books on Paul shows how burning the Jesus-Paul debate still is today. In his *Paul: The Mind of the Apostle* (1997), A. N. Wilson claims that “the historicity of Jesus became unimportant from the moment Paul had his apocalypse.”⁴⁹ The Crucifixion became Paul’s “obsessive religious attention” as he sought to mythologise pagan worship rituals.⁵⁰ The religion of Paul was thus a creative invention having little to do with the historical Jesus. N. T. Wright takes issue with Wilson in the last chapter of his *What Saint Paul Really Said: Was Paul of Tarsus the Real Founder of Christianity?* (1997). He questions Wilson’s portrait of Paul as a collaborator with Hellenism on the one hand and seeks to show how Jesus fulfilled Paul’s Jewish eschatological expectations on the other.⁵¹

1.3. Scope of Research

It can be seen from the above that after two hundred years of debate the Jesus-Paul problem is still very inconclusive. In view of the significance of the question, we undertake to explore the problem further. We ask if Paul was really influenced by the teaching of the earthly Jesus. If he was, how much and in what way was he influenced? Does the verbal correspondence between Jesus and Paul tell us anything about the relationship between them? Is there a continuity between the two? Since the problem is too huge we believe that it is necessary to confine our discussion to one theme in order to conduct a meaningful comparison between Jesus and Paul.

The theme of faith is chosen as our focus of discussion owing to its significance in Christianity. As observed by many scholars, πίστις and πιστεύω have become the central theological terms for the Christian religion.⁵² The noun πίστις and the verb πιστεύω occur 243 times in the NT, more frequently than ‘kingdom’ (162), ‘grace’ (156), ‘church’ (114), ‘save’ (107) and ‘righteousness’ (92).⁵³ Specifically, our attention zooms in on two groups of Jesus’ faith sayings, namely, ‘faith that can remove mountains’ and ‘your faith has healed/saved you’.

⁴⁹ A. N. Wilson, *Paul: The Mind of the Apostle* 73.

⁵⁰ A. N. Wilson, *Paul* 60.

⁵¹ N. T. Wright, *What Saint Paul Really Said* 167–183.

⁵² E.g., G. Barth in *EDNT* 3.92.

⁵³ G. Friedrich, “Glaube und Verkündigung bei Paulus,” 94.

Index of Authors

- Abegg, M., 247–249
Allison, D. C., 6, 33, 276–278
Barker, M., 117–118
Barrett, C. K., 47
Barth, G., 16
Barth, K., 207
Baur, F. C., 5
Betz, H. D., 204
Betz, O., 216–217
Blank, J., 8
Bowker, J. W., 199
Brownlee, W., 144
Bruce, F. F., 199, 208, 223
Bruners, W., 190
Buber, M., 198
Bultmann, R., 4, 7, 15–17, 50, 59, 62,
179, 183, 189, 194, 197–198, 203,
207, 211–212, 296
Burger, C., 180
Calvin, J., 207, 211
Casey, M., 223
Charlesworth, J., 141
Cludius, H. H., 5
Collins, J., 120, 121
Cranfield, C. E. B., 243
Crossan, J. D., 28
Danker, F. W., 190
Davies, W. D., 6, 33
Deissmann, A., 81
Dibelius, M., 184, 199
Dodd, C. H., 215
Donaldson, T. L., 40–43
Dungan, D. L., 6
Dunn, J. D. G., 6–7, 22, 199, 204,
227–246, 249, 261–265
Duprez, A., 66–67, 69, 77–78
Ebeling, G., 8, 11, 17, 54
Ebrard, J. H. A., 5
Edelstein, L and E. 66, 84, 85, 86, 87,
89, 90
Ellis, E. E., 199, 207, 211
Evans, C. A., 82, 177, 179, 195
Feine, P., 5
Fiebig, P., 176
Fitzmyer, J. A., 199, 204
Fjärstedt, B., 6
Flusser, D., 108, 240, 244
Freyne, S., 113
Fuchs, E., 8
Furnish, V. P., 7
García Martínez, F., 108, 109, 144, 145,
147, 148, 150, 240
Gieseler, J. K. L., 5
Gnilka, J., 11, 58, 61
Goppelt, L., 17
Hahn, F., 22, 62, 232, 265
Hamm, D., 190–191
Hansen, G. W., 264
Harnack, A., 5, 72
Hays, R. B., 204
Heidegger, M., 8
Held, H. J., 173
Hengel, M., 280
Hogan, L., 99–100
Holtz, T., 7
Hooker, M., 9, 13
Jepsen, A., 133, 238
Jeremias, J., 4, 17, 60, 68, 78, 276
–278
Jüngel, E., 7–9, 297
Käsemann, E., 4, 7, 8, 62, 297
Kertelge, K., 58, 230
Köstenberger, A., 9
Kraus, H.-J., 134–135
Kümmel, W., 4, 7

- Laato, A., 35–36
 Lichtenberger, H., 227
 Lindars, B., 279
 Lindsay, D., 38
 Lührmann, D., 47
 Luz, U., 173
 McCasland, S. V., 72
 Moo, D., 205
 Neilsen, H., 56
 Neirynck, F., 6, 22
 Nickelsburg, G., 39
 Paret, H., 5
 Pesch, R., 58, 61
 Qimron, E., 241–243, 247
 Räisänen, H., 8
 Rengstorff, K. H., 66, 79–80
 Resch, A., 5–6
 Riesner, R., 6, 222
 Ringgren, H., 142–143, 150
 Robbins, V., 173–174
 Rudolph, W., 35
 Sanders, E. P., 227, 277
 Sanders, J. A., 152
 Schenke, L., 58
 Schiffman, L., 241–243, 245
 Schrage, W., 91
 Schlatter, A., 5, 11, 188
 Schmidt, H., 134, 135
 Schweizer, E., 184
 Schwemer, A. M., 280
 Simmons, W. A., 9, 12
 Sokoloff, M., 256
 Stanley, D. M., 6
 Stemberger, G., 258
 Stendahl, K., 211
 Strauss, D. F., 5
 Strobel, A., 39
 Strugnell, J., 241–243, 247
 Stuhlmacher, P., 6
 Theissen, G., 11, 57, 58, 83–85, 88,
 92, 95–96, 173, 174, 179,
 195
 Thenius, O., 5
 Thompson, M., 6
 Turner, N., 172
 Tuckett, C. M., 21
 Vermes, G., 142, 145, 146, 151, 178,
 214, 217, 240
 von Rad, G., 234
 Walter, N., 6, 13, 22, 34, 287, 298
 Wedderburn, A. J. M., 4
 Wegenast, K., 6
 Wells, L., 65
 Wendland, P., 67
 Wenham, D., 7, 8–9, 12, 17
 Wilckens, U., 183
 Wilson, A. N., 10
 Wilson, S. G., 4
 Wischmeyer, O., 47–48
 Wrede, W., 4, 5–6, 7, 18, 287
 Wright, N. T., 10, 56

Index of References

1. Old Testament (with the Apocrypha)

<i>Genesis</i>			
4:25	266	22:1	260–265, 269, 282, 292
7:1	235	22:1–19	251
7:3	266	22:3	162
11:31	238	22:5	259–260
12	107, 126, 236–237, 248, 265–266	22:17	255
12:1	238	22:18	252
12:3	232, 265, 270	25:21	265, 280
12:7	266	26:2–5	102
12:10–20	101, 107	30:2	235–237, 239, 248, 250
15	235–239, 247, 248, 251–253, 255, 260, 265–266, 282	30:22–23	102
		50:2	108
<i>Exodus</i>			
15:1	257	2:1–10	255
15:5	164, 252–253, 255	8:18	108
15:6	13, 133–134, 164, 197, 209, 225–227, 231, 232–283, 292	12:1–23:19	258
15:7	238	14	26
15:11	257	14:2	37
15:18–21	238	14:3	37
16:2	102	14:9	37
17	239, 248, 265	14:11	37
17:5	238, 272	14:12	37
17:17	279–280	14:13	30
18:12	102	14:15	258
18:18	232, 265, 270	15:17	34, 45
20	108, 126	15:26	99, 100, 174
20:1–18	101, 107	18:20	244
20:3	280	22:7	100
20:4	101	22:9	100
20:6	280	22:19	93
20:7	101	23:7	228
20:11	101	23:25–26	99
20:14–16	101	24:7	244
20:17–18	101	29:19–21	179
21	266	29:44	179
21:13	266	31:12–17	258
22	162, 231–232, 235– 239, 248, 251–253, 255,	32:27–29	147
		32:35	147
		33	147
		33:7	147

<i>33:13</i>	147	<i>2 Samuel</i>	
<i>33:16</i>	147	5:8	182
<i>35:1–13</i>	258	7	239
		7:10	239
<i>Leviticus</i>		7:12–16	181
10	147	15:9	186
10:4	147		
12:4	173	<i>1 Kings</i>	
13–14	101, 192	8:37–38	101
14:1–32	94	13:1–6	103
15	173	17:17	119
15:19–27	173	17:21–22	176
15:26–27	177	17:17–24	103
16	117	17:19	114
18:22	93	18:42	114
18:23	93		
20:15	93	<i>2 Kings</i>	
		4:18–37	103
<i>Numbers</i>		4:29	174
12	101	4:33	116, 176
12:10–15	192	5:7–8	104
21:4–9	68, 102, 118, 123, 223	5:8	188
21:8–9	124, 223	5:13	188
25	102	5:15	191
25:4–5	102	5:16	188
25:6–8	102	5:19	186
25:10–13	117	13:5	68
		13:21	174
<i>Deuteronomy</i>		20:3	104
4:48	27		
7:13–15	99	<i>1 Chronicles</i>	
7:15	119, 125	23:28	241
26:3	271		
28:1–68	99	<i>2 Chronicles</i>	
28:61	119	7:14	118, 120
30:15–20	99	16:12	107
32:22	23	16:12–13	105
		19:9	146
<i>Judges</i>		20:20	260
3:9	68	26:19	41–42
3:15	68	32	136–138, 169
12:3	68	32:6–22	136
<i>1 Samuel</i>		<i>Nehemiah</i>	
1:5	102	9:7–8	237–239, 248, 265, 266
1:9–18	103	9:8	250
1:17	177, 186	9:17	149
5–6	103	9:32	149
6:3	103	9:33	148
25:35	186		

<i>Job</i>			
9:5	23	105:42	259
42:5–6	105	106	247–248
		106:6	148
		106:7	149
<i>Psalms</i>		106:8	149
Ps 1	239	106:10	149
1:1–2	228	106:21	149
1:5	228	106:30	238
2	202, 239	106:31	247–248
2:2	278	106:45	149
6	106	106:47	149
15	212	107	106
15:1	34, 35	107:3	277
18	24	109:10	182
18:2	24	110	181
18:6ff.	24	114:1–8	23
18:7	24	118:20	260
18:20–26	24		
18:31	24		
18:7–8	24	Proverbs	
18:7–8	23	15:8	228
Ps 22	134–135, 191	16:3	134
22:1–2	135	26:25	98
22:3	135		
22:1–21	134, 135	Canticles	
22:4–5	135	4:8	260
22:8	135		
22:21	134, 135	Isaiah	
22:22	134	1:5–6	118
22:22–31	134, 135	1:8–9	42
27:3	133	1:21–23	42
27:8	134–135	2:2	42, 45
27:14	133	2:4	147
28	106	7:1–9	138
30	106	7:9	138, 140
30:2	106	7:10–14	105
30:8–10	106	11:9	210
37:5	134	12:2	138
38	106	12:2–4	138
41	106	14	206
46:2–3	23	19:20	68
50:3–6	192	25–27	278
50:14–15	192	25:9	139
50:23	192	26:1–2	139
65:6	23	26:2	260
73:14	101	30:26	119
83:3	208	33:15–16	212
88	106	33:24	119, 123
103	106	36–38	138
103:3	127	38	104–105
		38:3	104

38:7	105	<i>Ezekiel</i>	
38:13	105	6:1–7	42
38:14	105	7:2	214
38:15–16	105	17:22–24	36
38:18	105	34:4	118
38:19	105	34:23–31	36
38:20	105	36:1–12	42
38:22	105	37:15–28	36
40:4	23, 41	38:20	23, 41
41:15	23	40–48	36
42:15	41		
43:11	68	<i>Daniel</i>	
45:8	99, 133	3:17	158
45:21	68	3:18	158
49:6	202	4	120
49:12	278	4:28–37	105
51:5	99, 133, 135	8:9	214
52:1	259	9:5	148
52:7	120	9:7	148
52:14	120		
52:20	120	<i>Hosea</i>	
53	120, 129	2:21–22	260
53:1	120	5:13	118
53:3–4	119	9:10	45
53:4	101, 119, 120	13:4	68
53:4–5	129, 130		
53:8	120	<i>Amos</i>	
53:10	120	4:5	241
53:12	129, 130	7:14	113
54:10	23	8:2	213, 214
56:1	99, 133, 135, 206, 212		
61:1–2	177	<i>Jonah</i>	155
61:10	99, 133		
64:5	250	<i>Micah</i>	
		1:3–4	41
<i>Jeremiah</i>		3:12	42, 45
2:13	80	4:1	42, 45
4:24	23	4:1–2	34
6:14	118	4:2	45
8:22–9:6	107	6:8	212
9:2	208		
17:14	119	<i>Nahum</i>	
25:8	98	1:5	41
46	206		
46:11	107	<i>Habakkuk</i>	
51:8	107	1:1	200
<i>Lamentations</i>		1:2–4	200, 202
3:23	260	1:5	199–202
		1:5–11	200

1:12–2:1	200	<i>3 Maccabees</i>	155
2:2–20	200		
2:3	213–215, 290	<i>Sirach</i>	
2:3–4	215	2	154–156
2:4	13, 139–141, 196–227, 260, 270–271, 282, 288–292, 296–297	2:1	155
3	200	2:2	155
3:6	41	2:6	155
3:8	200, 206	2:7	155
3:12	200, 206	2:8	155
3:13	200	2:9	155
3:14	210	2:11	155, 156
3:18	200	2:12	155
		2:14	155, 156
		2:15	155
		2:16	155
<i>Haggai</i>		38	109–110, 112
1:5	35	38:1	110
2:15	35	38:2	110
		38:6	110
<i>Zechariah</i>		38:9	110
4	29, 36, 38	38:10	110
4:6–7	25–26, 28, 34–36, 41, 288	38:12–14	110
4:7	45	38:14	110
4:6–10	34, 36	44:10	250, 252
6:9–13	36	44:19	269
6:9–15	36	44:19–20	268
9:9	182	44:19–21	249–250
14	25	44:20	238, 251, 265, 269
14:4	25	44:21	250, 265
14:4–5	42	49:13	238
14:5	42		
14:10	25, 41	<i>Tobit</i>	
14:21	182	2:10	107
		3:1–6	107
		3:16–17	107
<i>Judith</i>		5:10	107
8:35	186	6:6	107
		6:9	107
<i>1 Maccabees</i>	155		
2:49–64	245	11:7–8	107
2:50–52	251–252	11:13–15	107
2:50–68	251	12:13	107
2:51	252, 261		
2:52	248, 251f.	<i>Wisdom of Solomon</i>	
		1:2	161
<i>2 Maccabees</i>		1:2	161
2:7	181	3:9	161
3:24–40	121–122	3:14	161
3:29	122	10:1	162
3:32	122	10:7	161

12:2	161	16:24	161
12:17	161	16:26	161
14:4–5	161–162	18:6	161
14:5	161	18:13	161
14:25	161	14:1	162
14:29	161	14:3	162
16:5–14	123–124, 223	14:5	162

II. New Testament

<i>Matthew</i>		<i>Mark</i>	
1:21	219, 220	27:39–43	95
3:7–10	275	28:16	39
4:4	220		
4:23	219	1:34	219
6:8	174	1:41	93
6:30	60	1:44	94
8:5–13	113	2:1–12	184
8:10	16, 72	2:5	16
8:11	276–277	2:5–7	184
8:13	59	2:9	115
8:25	173, 219	2:10–12	93
8:32	172	2:16	187
9:5–7	115	2:17	93, 130
9:11	178	2:23–3:6	223
9:13	186	3:1–6	94
9:18	221	3:6	184
9:19–22	57, 171–179	5:21	58
9:21	219–221	5:21–43	58
9:22	53, 177, 220–221, 274	5:23	219–221
9:29	59	5:24	58
12:38–39	94	5:24–34	57, 62, 71, 171–179
13:15	219	5:26	173
13:58	16, 94	5:28	220–221
14:30	219, 220	5:29	172, 221
14:36	219	5:34	16, 53, 58, 61, 176–177, 186, 219–221, 274
15:22	180–181		
15:28	16, 59	6:4–6	94
16:13	27	6:5–6	16
17:1	27, 46	6:56	219
17:14	46	7:24	71
17:18	46	7:31	71
17:20	26–27, 29, 31, 32, 45	7:33	93
18:19	27, 29	8:11–12	94
20:29–34	179–183	8:35	220
20:30	179	9:2	27
20:31	179	9:17–22	86
21:12–23ff.	44	9:17–22	86
21:21	26–27, 29, 32, 44	9:23–24	86

10:46–52	62, 179–183	18:38	179
10:47	179	18:39	179
10:48	85	18:42	53, 221
10:52	16, 53, 61, 221	19:1–10	278–279
11:1ff.	61	22:51	219
11:12	27, 60	24:50ff.	39
11:12–25	44		
11:19	44	<i>John</i>	
11:22–23	26, 31, 32	1:28	39
11:23	26, 27, 33, 44, 45	2:11	95
11:24	33	4:46–53	113
11:27	44	4:46–54	128
13:1–2	45	4:47	128
14:3–9	183	4:48	95, 128
15:27–32	95	4:50	128
15:30	219, 220	4:51	128
		4:53	95, 128, 129
<i>Luke</i>			
3:7–9	275	5:4	77
4:23	130	5:6	128
5:23–24	115	5:8	115
7:1–10	113	5:9	128
7:9	72	5:11	128
7:11–15	95	5:13	128
7:14	94	5:14	128, 129
7:18–19	72	5:15	128, 219
7:36–50	62, 183–189	7:23	219
7:39	173, 178	8:34–36	129
7:41–42	62	8:48	193
7:50	53, 221	9:2	128, 183
8:12	59	9:3	128
8:42–48	57, 171–179	9:6	81, 82, 93
8:47	172, 221	9:7	81
8:48	53, 176–177, 221, 274	9:31	190
8:50	220–221, 221	9:35–39	129
10:25	220	10:31	175
10:28	220	11:12	219
13:10–17	278–279	20:31	128
13:11–13	108	<i>Acts</i>	
13:16	274, 279	1:12	39
13:22–30	277	3–4	115
13:28	276–277	3:6	114, 116
16:19–31	278–279	3:7–8	114, 115
17:5ff.	81	3:8	114
17:5–6	32	3:16	114, 115, 116, 167
17:6	26, 29, 32	4:7	116
17:11–19	62, 189–193	4:9	114, 115, 167
17:19	54, 174, 220–221	4:9–10	114, 115, 167
18:9–14	15, 279	4:10	114, 116
18:35–43	179–183	5:20	223

7	266	4:13–24	267
7:2–4	266	4:16–17	265
7:5–7	266	4:19	282
7:8	266	4:22–25	273–274, 282, 297
9:19	50	4:23–25	272, 282
9:26–28	50	6:1–8:11	207
9:34	116	6:3–10	130
10:25–26	191	6:16	297
11:25–26	50	6:17	33
13	199	8:3	130, 209
13:16–41	199	8:4	228
13:26	223	8:18–39	207
13:30	202	9–11	211
13:32–52	202, 210	9:7	271
13:37	202	9:30–33	209
13:38	202	11	211
13:39	200	11:23	211
13:41	199, 201–203	11:25–26	211
13:47	202	12:1ff	207, 297
14:9	115	12:14–21	228
15:9	115, 167	12:19	31
15:11	84, 115, 167, 168	13:8–10	228
16:31	115, 168	14:11	31
19:11–12	174	14:17	15
		15:18–19	56
<i>Romans</i>		15:19	281, 282
1	208	16:27	211
1:1	273		
1:1–4	297	<i>I Corinthians</i>	
1:2	266	1:18–2:16	282
1:5	209, 270, 271, 297	4:8	21
1:16	204, 211, 213	4:20	15
1:16–17	205, 210, 216, 273, 297	6:9–10	15
1:17	199, 200, 203–208, 212	6:14	202
1:18	206	7:10	30
3:9–10	267	7:10–11	6, 15
3:20	209, 267	7:10	227
3:20–26	270	9:14	6, 15, 30
3:21–26	273	11:2	33
3:23–26	282	11:23	33, 33
3:25	207, 266	11:23–25	15, 30
3:31	228	12:9	47, 56, 281
4	199, 227–228, 269	12:19	16
4:1	269	12:28	56
4:3	231	12:30	56
4:3–5	209	13	47
4:3–12	231	13:7	47
4:4–5	228–234, 249, 261, 263–264	13:1–3	25
4:10ff.	269	13:2	12, 13, 18, 21–34, 47–49, 281, 288

14:21	31	2:12	15
15:1	33	4:1	33
15:3	33	4:15	15
15:24	15		
15:50	15		
		<i>Hebrews</i>	
		2:3	266
<i>2 Corinthians</i>		10:25	215
4:13	47	10:36	215
6:17	31	10:37–38	215, 216, 292
6:18	31	11	266
12:12	16, 281	11:11	102
		11:23	167
<i>Galatians</i>		12:25	219
1:4	219	13:23	266
1:17	280		
3	208, 227, 232	<i>James</i>	
3:1–5	208	1:21	220
3:5	47	2:14	220
3:11	199, 203, 204, 208–210	2:14–26	168
3:16	265	2:16	186
4:1–5	282	2:21–23	260–261
5:1	208	2:22	168, 261
5:6	47	2:23	261
5:21	15	4:12	220
		5:13–16	115–116, 168, 130
		5:15	168, 219, 220
<i>Ephesians</i>			
5:23	68	<i>1 Peter</i>	
6:17	219	2:24	129–130
		4:8	184
<i>Philippians</i>			
2:6–11	282	<i>Revelation</i>	
3:20	68	1:5	79
		6:14	42
<i>Colossians</i>		6:14	42
1:24	130	6:15–16	42
		12	79
<i>1 Thessalonians</i>		22:8–9	191
1:5	282, 282	17–18	206

III. Dead Sea Scrolls

CD 14.2	151	14.25	150
1QapGen	107–109	14.25	150
1QH		16.17	141, 145–146
7.6f.	150, 153	16.17	141, 145–146
11.8f.	151	17.14	141, 145–146
12.11–13	150		
14.15f.	151	1QpHab	
		7.16–17	142

8.1–3	141	4QMMT	
8.2	141–143	(4Q399)	241–249
1QS		4QpIs ^a fr.vii+	
1.18–26	149	3.20	141
1.19	149	4Q213	27
1.24–25	148	4Q508 fr.iii	
3:4–4:26	109	1.2	149
4:6–7	109	1.3	141, 148–149
4.21	153	1.4	149
5.26	141	4Q511	
8.3	141, 144–145	fr.xvii 1.1	141
10.25	141, 144–145	4Q511	
11.11–15	151	fr.xviii 2.9	141, 150–151
1QM 13.3	141	4Q511	
2QapMo fr.i		fr.lxvii 1.1	141
1.2	141, 147–148	4Q521	181
4QFlorilegium		11QPs	
(4Q174)	239–241	19.9	141, 152–153
1.1–9	239–240	19.14	141, 152–153
1.1–7	243	11Q19	182, 192

IV. Targums

<i>Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis</i>		<i>Fragmentary Targum: Genesis</i>	
15:1	257	15:1	257
15:6	256	35:9	256
15:11	257		
<i>Targum Onqelos: Genesis</i>		<i>Targum of 2 Samuel</i>	
Gen 15:1	257	5:8	182
Gen 15:6	256		
17:17	280	<i>Targum of Isaiah</i>	
		7:9	140
		28:21	42
<i>Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis</i>		12:1–2	139
15:1	257–258	12:2	12
15:5	255		
15:6	256	<i>Targum of Habakkuk</i>	
15:11	257	1:2–3	201
		2:4	140, 218

V. Rabbinic Literature

Mishna		Tosefta	
<i>mBer.</i> 5.1	113	<i>tHul.</i>	
<i>mBik.</i> 1.4	271–272	2.21–23	127
<i>mTohar.</i> 5.8	177		

Babylonian Talmud		Mekilta	
<i>bBer.</i> 17b	126	<i>Tractate Beshallah</i>	
<i>bBer.</i> 34b	113–114	4.124–125	267
<i>bBer.</i> 60a	114	4.130–133	267
<i>bHul.</i> 86a	126	4.138–143	267
<i>bMak.</i> 24a	212	4.144–159	260
<i>bNed.</i> 41b	127		
<i>bQidd.</i> 36a	271–272	<i>Pesiata Rabbati</i>	
<i>bSanh.</i> 97b	215	108a	272
<i>bTa'an.</i> 24b	113, 126		
<i>bTa'an.</i> 25a	113	<i>Pirke Aboth</i>	
<i>bSanh.</i> 32a	272	5.22	280
Jerusalem Talmud			
<i>yBik.</i> 1.4	272	<i>Pirke Mashiah</i>	
		72	43
Rabbah			
<i>Genesis Rabbah</i>		<i>Pirke R. Yoshiyyahu</i>	
44	257	115	43
<i>Leviticus Rabbah</i>			
34.3	78	<i>Tehillim</i>	
<i>Numbers Rabbah</i>		68	43
3.2	272	318	43

VI. Classical and Hellenistic Works

Antiphanes		<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i>	
44	38	2.5665	82
		8.1.2584	93
Aristides			
<i>Oratio</i>		Diogenes Laertius	
23.15–18	88	<i>Vitae Philosophorum</i>	
42.1–15	88	3.45	89
<i>The Sacred Tales</i>			
3.45–48	70	Herodotus	
3.47	70	1.59	38
3.46	70		
		Homer	
Asclepius		<i>Odyssey</i>	
<i>Epidarus</i>		9.480–485	23
3	84		
4	85	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i>	
5	87	14.966	90
9	85		
10	86	Josephus	
14	93	<i>Antiquities</i>	
36	87	1.208–211	126
37	87	1.224	163
42	93	2.205	166

2.207	166	<i>de confusione linguarum</i>
2.209	166	36.181 125
2.210–229	165	<i>de migratione Abrahami</i>
2.212–216	166	124 126
2.217	167	<i>de mutatione nominum</i>
2.217–228	165–167	34.221 111
2.218	166, 167, 190	154 280
2.219	166	160 280
2.221	166	175 280
2.222–223	166	<i>de sacrificiis Abelis et Caini</i>
2.223	166	70–71 111–112, 125
2.228	166, 167	<i>legum allegoriam</i>
2.327	38	2.79 125
2.327–333	36–37	<i>quis rerum divinarum heres sit</i>
2.328	37	90–93 253–254
2.329	38	94–95 254
2.331	38	
2.332	38	
2.333	26, 36–38, 41	Livius
7.61	38	<i>ab urbe condita</i>
8.45–49	112	9.3.3 23
8.45–49	77	
9.223–226	41ff.	
17.168–171	112	Lucian
18.3	73	<i>Navigium</i>
18.29–30	191	45 23
20.118	191	
<i>Bellum</i>		
2.21.6	73	Strabo
<i>Jewish War</i>		<i>Geography</i>
.189	73	8.6.15 84
7.451–453	112	16.2.22 71
		17.1.17 84
Philo		17.3.14 71
<i>de Abrahamo</i>		
167–276	162–165	Porphyrius
170	164	<i>de Abstinentia</i>
173–177	163	2.19 93
175	163	
176	162, 191	
177	163	Tacitus
192	164	<i>History</i>
196	164	4.81 81–82
200–207	253	
262	261	
262–263	164, 253	
268	164, 191	
269	164	
273	164, 253	

VII. Pseudepigraphical and Early Christian Works

<i>Apocalypse of Moses</i>		<i>Historia ecclesiastica</i>	
40	43	7.18	71–72
<i>Didascalia</i>		<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>	
XV	28–29	48	27–28
<i>I Enoch</i>	39, 117–118, 122–123	106	27–28
1–36	122		
7:1	122		
10:7	123	<i>Jubilees</i>	
37–71	123	15:17	280
40:9	123		
67:7–13	123	<i>Testament of Levi</i>	
91–107	123	2:5	27
96:1	123		
96:3	123		
Eusebius		<i>Testament of Solomon</i>	
<i>De Vita Constantini</i>		23	28
3.56	90	20:1	181

Index of Subjects

Abraham

- children of Abraham, 271–283
- faith, 164, 232–283
- healing, 108, 126, 174
- intercession, 101, 106, 108, 174
- merit, 250, 254–269
- prototype of Christian faith, 267, 273–274, 282–283
- works/faithfulness, 156, 158, 160, 162–164, 232–283

Asclepius

- differences with Jesus, 92–97
 - faith, 83–92, 94–95, 96–97
 - in first-century Palestine, 69–83
 - similarities with Jesus, 83–92
 - syncretism with other gods, 70–71
 - syncretism with Yahweh, 82
- Authenticity**
- criteria, 54–56
 - of Bartimaeus, 60–61, 179–181
 - of mountain-removing faith sayings, 31–33
 - of Jesus' healing miracles, 56–57
 - of the Samaritan leper, 62, 189
 - of the sinful woman, 62, 183–185
 - of the story of the woman with a bleeding, 62, 171–172
 - of 'Your faith has healed/saved you', 59–64

Bartimaeus (Mk 10:46–52 and par.)

- historicity, 60–61, 179–181
- faith, 181–182
- meaning of ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε, 182–183

Faith

- and faithfulness, 258–260
- and life, 158, 160–161, 208, 222, 296–297
- as prerequisite for healing miracles, 11, 17, 29, 94–95, 97, 114–115

- and works, 13, 15, 209–210, 235, 249, 260–263
 - Christian, 198, 273
 - Christocentrivity, 14, 115, 116, 168, 175, 182, 196, 198, 207, 273, 293
 - importance, 10–11
 - justification, 8, 14, 15, 16, 53, 197, 205, 208–209, 211, 226–230, 233, 261–263, 267–268, 283, 292–293, 296
 - kerygma-faith, 16–17, 47, 48, 50, 62, 198, 281–282, 290, 293–294
 - miracle-faith, 14, 16–17, 35–36, 38, 46, 47, 50, 62, 92, 175, 179, 293
 - miracle-salvation faith, 14, 38, 39, 46, 47–48, 50, 53, 92, 96, 97, 175, 179, 181, 194, 281–283, 290, 293–295
 - salvation-faith, 14, 16, 34–38, 46–49, 53, 92, 175, 194, 295
 - theocentrivity, 14, 115, 116, 168, 169, 171, 175, 182, 190, 193, 196, 202, 207, 212, 224, 273, 274, 290, 293–294, 296
- Faith in Acts, 167–168**
- Faith in Asclepius, 83–92, 94–95, 96–97**
- Faith in James, 168**
- Faith in Jesus**
- children of Abraham, 275–281
 - eschatological element, 39–47, 96, 192, 291
 - faith as prerequisite for healing, 11, 17, 29, 94–95, 97, 114–115
 - faith claims, 175–176, 181–182, 188, 191–192, 193, 274, 295–296
 - influenced by Hab 2:4, 216–225, 289
 - miracle-salvation faith, 46, 175, 194, 281–282, 294
 - purity issue, 92–94, 176–179, 182–183, 189, 192–195, 274–275, 291
 - theocentrivity, 175, 193, 294
- Faith in Jewish tradition, 101–116, 133–169**

Faith in Paul

- Christocentrism, 196, 290, 294
- eschatological element, 47–49, 202, 205–206, 208, 291
- faith as belief/trust, 202–203, 207, 209, 212, 270–271
- faith as faith/faithfulness, 209, 297
- faith as faithfulness/loyalty, 203, 207, 209, 212, 270–271
- individual element, 211–212
- influenced by early Church, 213–216, 290–292
- influenced by Jesus, 212–225, 292
- influenced by Jewish tradition, 197–212, 290
- justification by faith apart from works, 267–271, 283
- miracle–salvation faith, 47–48, 281–283, 290, 294–295
- national element, 210–212
- originality, 265–271, 291
- theocentrism, 202, 273, 290, 294
- use of Jesus tradition in 1 Cor 13:2, 30–33
- use of Gen 15:6, 264–283
- use of Hab 2:4, 196–225

Healer

- Asclepius as healer, 79, 86, 92
- God as healer, 100, 101, 104, 105, 106, 108, 111–112, 114, 116, 174–175, 296
- Jesus as healer, 127, 194
- terminology, 69
- Healer in Hellenistic world, 97
- Healer in Jewish world, 67, 83, 97, 101, 118, 126, 127, 170, 181
- Healer in pagan world, 67, 107–108
- Healing
 - and faith, 101–116
 - and salvation, 59, 91, 116–131, 170, 188, 296
- Healing in Acts, 114–116
- Healing in Asclepius, 83–97
- Healing in James, 115–116, 130
- Healing in Jesus, 170–195
- Healing in Jewish tradition, 98–131
- Healing in Paul, 56, 281–283, 290, 294–295
- Healing in Peter, 129–130

Jesus-Paul relationship

- apparent dichotomies, 15–17, 293
- described using controls, 12–14, 287–293, 298
- historical link, 12–13, 18, 49, 298
- Jesus-Paul debate, 3–10
- method of theological comparison, 7–12, 18, 287
- Paul as follower of Jesus, 8–9, 12, 293
- Paul as ‘second founder of Christianity’, 4–5, 8, 10, 12, 18, 287, 293
- seen against Jewish biblical tradition, 12, 288, 290, 291, 292, 294, 296, 298
- verbal parallel, 6–9, 12, 31, 287, 288

Justification

- and Kingdom of God, 8, 14, 15, 293
- by faith, 8, 14, 15, 16, 53, 197, 205, 208–209, 211, 226–230, 233, 261–263, 267–268, 283, 292–293, 296
- by works, 248–249, 252, 263, 267–268

Kerygma, 15, 17, 60, 197, 282

- and miracle, 17, 282–283, 290

Kerygma-faith, 16–17, 47, 48, 50, 62, 198, 281–282, 290, 293–294

- Kingdom of God, 46, 55, 177, 179, 181, 193, 194, 196, 272, 274, 275, 276, 291, 296
- and justification, 8, 14, 15, 293

Life

- and faith, 158, 160–161, 208, 222, 296–297
- and healing, 122, 129, 296
- and salvation, 124, 129, 158, 159, 161, 163, 166, 169, 170, 206, 208, 216–223, 288, 296

Life in Jewish tradition, 118, 122

Miracle

- and kerygma, 47, 282
- definition, 56
- faith as a prerequisite, 11, 17, 29, 94–95, 97, 114–115
- Miracle-faith, 14, 16–17, 35–36, 38, 46, 47, 50, 62, 92, 175, 179, 293

- Miracle in Hellenistic world, 11, 81, 83–84, 92–97, 170

- Miracle in Jesus, 11, 56–57, 60–63, 68, 92–97, 113, 176, 177, 179, 273
- Miracle in Jewish tradition, 68, 104, 112, 113–114, 126, 170, 176, 178, 260
- Miracle in Paul, 56, 281–283, 290, 294–295
- Miracle-salvation faith, 14, 38, 39, 46, 47–48, 50, 53, 92, 96, 97, 175, 179, 181, 194, 281–283, 290, 293–295
- Miracle worker, 57, 61, 84, 88, 96, 126–127, 170, 181
- Mountain
 - holy mountain tradition, 40–43
- Mountain-removal faith
 - mountain-removing faith in Jewish tradition, 34–38
 - mountain-removing faith in Jesus, 39–46, 288
 - mountain-removing faith in Paul, 47–49, 288
- Mountain-removing faith saying(s)
 - importance, 11
 - Marcan tradition, 33, 44–45
 - parallels, 21–33
 - Q tradition, 33, 45–46
 - tradition history, 32–33
- ‘New Perspective’ on Paul, 226–234, 245–249, 261–264
- Parallels
 - of 1 Cor 13:2, 21–30, 288
 - of Hab 2:4, 216–225
 - of ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε, 216–225
- Purity in Asclepius, 92–94
- Purity in Jesus, 92–94, 176–179, 182, 189, 192–195, 225, 291, 295–296
- Purity in Jewish tradition, 173, 178, 182, 192, 244–246
- Purity in Paul, 284–275, 283, 291, 293, 296
- ‘Reckon righteous’
 - in Paul, 273–275, 283, 291
 - in Qumran, 242, 247–249
- Salvation
 - and faith, 38–39, 132–169, 170, 181–182, 190–192
 - and healing, 59, 91, 116–131, 170, 188, 296
 - and life, 124, 129, 158, 159, 161, 163, 166, 169, 170, 208, 216–223
 - spiritual, 60, 90–92, 96, 159–161, 182–183
 - terminology, 68–69, 89
- Salvation-faith, 14, 16, 34–38, 46–49, 53, 92, 175, 194, 295
- Salvation in Hellenistic world, 70, 88–92, 95–97
- Salvation in Jewish world, 132–169
- Samaritan leper (Lk 17:11–19)
 - faith, 190–192
 - meaning of ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε, 190, 192–193
- Saviour
 - Asclepius as saviour, 64, 79, 88, 90, 97
 - God as saviour, 68, 111–113, 124, 125–126, 139, 162–163, 169, 191
 - Jesus as saviour, 65–66, 68, 72, 79, 90, 97, 127, 203, 212, 267
 - terminology, 69
- Saviour in Hellenistic world, 67–68, 72, 83, 113
- Saviour in Jewish world, 113, 124, 127
- Saviour-healer, 66, 67–69, 72, 73, 92, 170, 181
 - Asclepius as saviour-healer, 65, 70, 72, 78, 83, 88–89, 92, 96–97, 132, 289
 - Jesus as saviour-healer, 65–66, 72, 78, 83, 88–89, 92, 96–97, 132, 289
 - popularity of saviour-healers, 67–69
- Woman who anointed Jesus (Lk 7:36–50)
 - faith, 185–188
 - meaning of ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε, 185, 188–189
- Woman who touched Jesus’ garment (Mk 10:46–52 and par.)
 - faith, 171–175
 - meaning of ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε, 175–179
 - alleged statue, 71–73
- Works
 - and faith, 13, 15, 209–210, 235, 249,

- 260–263
– of Abraham, 254–259, 261–263
Works in James, 168, 260–261
Works in Paul, 208, 209–210, 215,
 226–234, 235, 261–263
'Works of the law', 239–249
'Works of the law' in Qumran,
 239–249
- 'Your faith has healed/saved you'
(ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε)
– Aramaic original, 98–99, 216–224
– authenticity, 53–54, 57–63
– importance, 11
– influenced by Hab 2:4, 216–225
– meaning, 170–195
– Peshitta rendering, 218–222

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

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